

I believe, in general, that it is in the best interest of the taxpayers for applicants and their proposals to be thoroughly screened, rather than blindly approved. This program, above all else, was designed to help small businesses, and I believe we should carefully review policy changes that are intended to expand a CDC's territory to make sure that the real goal—increasing access to the program for small businesses—is achieved.

The second provision gives the SBA the authority to reprogram unused funds to make up for the significant shortfall of appropriations for the 7(a) loan program. In its budget request for FY 2000, and again recently, the SBA estimated that the demand in this popular lending program would grow to a program level of \$10.5 billion. Unfortunately, it was only appropriated enough to support a level of close to \$9.8 billion. The Administration's estimate has proven to be more accurate than Congress anticipated, and the SBA needs additional funds to keep the program running throughout this fiscal year. This bill restores \$500 million of the \$700 million shortfall. I strongly support this provision and worked with Senator BOND to draft this legislation. I appreciate his cooperation and respectfully urge the appropriators in both the Senate and House to work with us.

Lastly, Mr. President, this bill also includes a technical change to the Historically Underutilized Business Zone small business contracting program (HUBZone program) administered by the SBA. The HUBZone program is designed to provide contracting opportunities in economically distressed areas of this country. One of the criteria for this program is that a small business must be located in a qualified census tract or nonmetropolitan county based on unemployment statistics from the Department of Labor and the Department of the Census.

As new data becomes available, there is a possibility that HUBZone firms would lose their eligibility, because the data could reflect that the census tract the firm is located in is technically no longer considered an economically depressed area. As ranking member of the Committee on Small Business and as a cosponsor of the original HUBZone law passed in 1997, I am concerned that when a particular area is no longer deemed HUBZone-eligible, small business owners in that area will lose the ability to bid on contracting opportunities under the program with little or no warning. This will be disruptive to the program and could discourage participation by qualified small businesses.

Because it is better policy to provide both small firms and the SBA with some sort of warning before a firm is deemed ineligible, this amendment is intended to allow a HUBZone firm located in an economically depressed area that has been redesignated by either Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

or Census data, to remain eligible under the program for three additional years. Thus the firm is put on notice that contracting opportunities under the program may not be available in the future, and the business is given time to plan for this change.

While I understand only a handful of firms were affected by a change in designated areas when new BLS data was released last year, I support the chairman's effort to ensure that no firm is taken by surprise this year. I am pleased that Senator BYRD and his staff worked together with my staff to come up with appropriate language for this amendment.

In closing, I want to thank my colleagues for supporting this bill. If, as expected, it is enacted, they will have improved the business climate and taken a few more steps to ensure that small businesses have access to capital and expanded procurement opportunities.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent the committee amendment be agreed to, the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statement relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The committee amendment, as amended, was agreed to.

The bill (H.R. 2614), as amended, was read the third time and passed.

SCHOOL GOVERNANCE CHARTER AMENDMENT ACT OF 2000

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President I ask unanimous consent the Senate now proceed to the consideration of H.R. 4387, which is at the desk.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (H.R. 4387) to provide that the School Governance Charter Amendment Act of 2000 shall take effect upon the date such Act is ratified by the voters of the District of Columbia.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (H.R. 4387) was read the third time and passed.

THE SMITHSONIAN ASTROPHYSICAL OBSERVATORY SUBMILLIMETER ARRAY ON MAUNA KEA AT HILO, HAWAII

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Rules Committee be discharged from further consideration of S. 2498, and the Senate then proceed to its immediate consideration.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 2498) to authorize the Smithsonian Institutions to plan, design, construct and equip laboratory, administrative, and support space to house base operations for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Submillimeter Array located on Mauna Kea at Hilo, Hawaii.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 2498) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 2498

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. FACILITY AUTHORIZED.

The Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution is authorized to plan, design, construct, and equip laboratory, administrative, and support space to house base operations for the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory Submillimeter Array located on Mauna Kea at Hilo, Hawaii.

SEC. 2. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.

There are authorized to be appropriated to the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution to carry out this Act, \$2,000,000 for fiscal year 2001, and \$2,500,000 for fiscal year 2002, which shall remain available until expended.

MAKING TECHNICAL CORRECTIONS TO THE STATUS OF CERTAIN LAND HELD IN TRUST FOR THE MISSISSIPPI BAND OF CHOCTAW INDIANS

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of Calendar No. 595, S. 1967.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the bill by title.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1967) to make technical corrections to the status of certain land held in trust for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, to take certain land into trust for that Band, and for other purposes.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent the bill be read a third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and any statements relating to the bill be printed in the RECORD.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1967) was read the third time and passed, as follows:

S. 1967

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,